

Woman's Identity and the Reformation of Muslim Societies

A Lecture by
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Abstract

Because the true message of Islam concerning women was rarely practiced throughout the past 14 centuries of Muslim history, women scholar-activists who self-identify with Islam have been taking it upon themselves to reinterpret the Qur'an and change attitudes about gender and the role of women. But the writings of these scholars do not seem to reach those politicized mostly male Muslims who are running the present social and political affairs in Muslim-majority societies and in many Muslim communities in the West. To the contrary, most Muslim male extremists are leading a counter-revolution against gender justice by taking Qur'anic verses out of their context and misusing the reported narratives (Hadith) attributed to the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. In addition, although Muslim women are majority college graduates in most Muslim societies, only few participate in developing and shaping Islamic thought. Therefore, I am making wake-up calls to Muslim women to stand up for their given rights in the Qur'an as the only divine, binding source; and to rethink the authority of the reported Hadith, especially those narratives that contradict the Qur'an. Many of such narratives form the heart of the so-called shari'a which should not be binding. I will present some examples to analyze how basic principles of Islam can be re-read to facilitate building an egalitarian Muslim society in order to restructure the Muslim mind.

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